



Maine Source Water Assessment Program

Final Source Assessment Report

The 1996 amendments to the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) require each State to complete assessments for each public water supply source, which identify and describe conditions that may threaten the quality of water available to consumers. These assessments are the focus of Maine's Source Water Assessment Program or SWAP. The Drinking Water Program is responsible for completing an assessment for each public water supply source and publishing the results for the benefit of the operators of each system and their customers. To achieve this goal, the results of each assessment will be made widely available to the general public.

Maine has approximately 2,200 public water systems which provide drinking water to half a million people by drawing water from more than 2,600 individual water sources (wells and surface water intakes). Examples of these sources include:

- A seasonal boys and girls camp in the western Maine mountains withdrawing water from a great pond to supply the cabins, lodge, and shower houses.
- A mid-coast village of 120 homes, a church, a fire station and a general store, all supplied by a single bedrock well.
- A southern Maine municipality of more than 10,000 residents supplied by three high-yield gravel packed wells.

Public water suppliers are required to periodically test the water they serve and if necessary, to treat the water in order to meet state and federal standards for water quality. For this reason, you can be reasonably sure that the water you pour into your glass today is safe to drink. But sometimes Maine public water supply sources do get contaminated. Human and animal waste, gasoline and other volatile organic compounds, nitrate from fertilizers, and landfill leachate are among the pollutants that commonly affect water quality. Diminished water quality in some lakes has led some public water suppliers to build facilities to filter and disinfect the water or to abandon the surface water source in favor of wells. Developing a new ground water supply can cost a town more than half a million dollars. So how can water supply contamination and costly remedies be prevented? By protecting each source from activities that can lead to contamination.

The responsibility for protecting public water supply sources from contamination falls largely to public water suppliers. However, land use decisions are made by municipal officials not water suppliers. This means that protection of public water supplies requires a partnership between water suppliers, state and federal regulators, local land owners, and municipalities. The lengths to which Maine communities have gone to protect the public water sources in their town/city vary greatly from place to place from land purchases at one extreme to no action at the other. In some

cases, when a source is surrounded by protected land such as a state park, no further protection efforts may be required. In other cases, immediate and significant actions should be implemented in order to ensure that existing sources of drinking water are available for future generations. The type and selected course of action taken should be proportional to the level of risk.

The Maine Drinking Water Program's goal is to ensure that when a water supply is at risk for contamination, the citizens of Maine are made aware so that appropriate steps can be taken at the local level to minimize or eliminate the risk. That is the purpose of the **Source Water Assessment Program or SWAP**. By implementing SWAP, the Drinking Water Program has *evaluated* each of the 2,600 public water supply sources, *assessed* each for the likelihood of contamination by existing and future activities, and is *making the results of these studies widely available* to the public.

Assessments consist of three evaluations:

Risk based on well type: Dug wells and springs represent a high risk. Gravel wells, well points, bedrock wells with less than 20 feet of overburden and bedrock wells with overburden depths unknown represent a moderate risk. Bedrock wells with 20 feet or more of overburden will be considered to be low risk based upon well type and geology.

Existing risk of acute contamination: Wells with positive bacteria tests or nitrate tests greater than 5 ppm during the previous three years are considered high risk. Wells with sources of acute contaminants within 300 feet and good water quality tests are considered moderate risks. Wells with no sources of acute contamination within 300 feet and no positive bacteria tests or nitrate tests over 5 ppm have a low risk.

Future risk of acute contamination: Public water supplies which own or have legal control of all the land within 300 feet of their wells will be considered at low risk for future contamination. If the system does not own or have legal control of all the land within 300 feet of a public supply well or if the status of ownership is unknown, the well will receive a moderate risk evaluation.

At this point the assessment process ends for the State and the time for protective action on your part begins. The DWP will be available to provide technical and in some cases financial assistance for protection efforts, but these efforts will have to be initiated locally. Source Protection needs to include full participation from the water suppliers and local officials to be successful. The water supplier is responsible for providing safe drinking water to the population they serve. Town and City officials need to address this issue because contaminated drinking water sources can negatively impact the local economy. To ensure that this water is always safe to drink, you must become involved in overseeing the activities that could contaminate it.

The Drinking Water Program intends this SWAP report to be a summary of the current and potential future risks to your public water supply source and as a guide for future protection activities. You should receive one report for each source you currently utilize. As always, we're here to provide any help or assistance we can. Technical assistance requests can be directed to the Source Protection Section of the Maine Drinking Water Program 207-287-8074.

Please read the following report carefully. The Drinking Water Program wants to insure that all of the information is complete and the assessments are accurate. Any problems or inaccuracies should be reported to the Source Protection Section of the Drinking Water Program as soon as possible.